

Statement of Sally K. Richardson, Executive Director of the WVU Institute for Health Policy Research

In 2004, 122,000 plus elderly, blind and disabled Medicaid members – comprising about 33 percent of West Virginia’s total Medicaid population – accounted for over 61 percent of Medicaid expenditures. These individuals are served through two relatively small home and community based waiver programs, but most are primarily served in a fee for service delivery system.

In 2001, the Muskie School of Public Service at the University of Maine visited our State and prepared a report on home and community based services and the long term care service system provided in West Virginia. Some basic findings of the report were: (1) case management and outreach to clients was not necessarily coordinated with an individuals’ need, but rather with the services provided by the care manager; (2) no payment stream existed for a “residence component of community based services, leaving state providers and care managers without incentives for the placement of individuals in community based care as opposed to nursing homes where resident care was covered; and (3) little quality assurance was present in the provision of community based services.

At the time of the report, Medicaid’s long term care services were made up of diverse individual services provided to a client in their home, very often not coordinated with the client’s actual service needs. Between then and now, significant improvement has been made in many areas of concern address by the report. Nevertheless, little progress has been made in the development of a comprehensive community based program that could serve seniors in lieu of nursing home placement, and even though the State has expanded the numbers of seniors who can be served by its Medicaid waiver program, a major gap still exists in non-residential care support for those residing in their communities in assisted living housing or personal care homes.

What I’d like to talk to you about today is a new approach to long term care which can change the whole concept of long term care services in our state. It is a discrete project in Kanawha County which proposes to establish a geriatric center of excellence co-located with a Project of All Inclusive Care for the Elderly – better known as a PACE Center. PACE is a Medicaid program that incorporates both Medicaid and Medicare funding into a single stream of financial support for the services required by the individual.

This project – being developed by a partnership of county-based not for profit organizations -- is a purposeful adult day care center for seniors who need to be assisted in activities of daily living whether it is as simple as providing their medicine and meals on a timely basis, or as complicated as treating the needs of and providing safe, secure surroundings for those with dementia, early Alzheimer’s or other disabilities, and a whole range of habilitative and clinical care in between. Very often, such a center also helps meet the needs of family caregivers through such programs as training and education, caregiver support groups, and respite care for a caregiver who must work, or needs a vacation, or has other personal demands to be met.

The successful establishment of such a center will allow the elderly of Kanawha and its surrounding counties of Boone, Putnam and Clay get the services they need while they reside in their home or in community assisted housing.

In addition, the Center will assess and serve the medical, mental and other physical needs of seniors throughout the region, and support a continuum of senior care that gives equal assurance to an emphasis on wellness and well-being and provides prevention, habilitation, and engagement of its clients with their families, their communities, and their own specific interests.

With the support of community foundations, and the integration of multiple providers into a collaborative that is both innovative and efficient, the Center has been able to put together a business plan that is not only feasible, but will support the best quality health care, services to meet the health and social needs of an aging population, and an educational training site to model excellence in the practical application of the many diverse services that are needed for health and well being of our seniors.

In addition it will serve as a model of comprehensive care and services for other areas of West Virginia and other rural states as well. As a model, it will be one of the first rural PACE centers to provide safe, secure patient-centered day care for West Virginia's rural frail elderly.